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# McKINLEY PREPARATORY SCHOOL

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E. RUTH PYRTLE  
City Public Schools, Lincoln, Nebraska

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## HISTORY

The McKinley Preparatory School was started by Superintendent W. L. Stephens in September, 1909, in the McKinley Building, under the supervision of the principal, E. Ruth Pyrtle. The first seventh preparatory class had 39 members. It was soon discovered that a number were unable to do the required work, so 26 of these entered in 1910 and finished as the first preparatory class. This class of 16 boys and 10 girls was taught by Miss Charlotte Alexander, in both the seventh and the eighth preparatory years. Each year following 1908 a class has entered the seventh preparatory class. The average membership in these classes has been 22, equally divided between boys and girls. In September, 1910, the first preparatory class entered the Sophomore class of the high school. Each succeeding year a class has entered the Sophomore class.

## PURPOSE

The preparatory school was established to give pupils who are capable, both mentally and physically, a chance to do more extensive work than the regular course of study provides. Leading educators everywhere are convinced that there is a great deal of waste in education, both in subject-matter and in time. The arguments in favor of saving of time in the elementary course are well set forth in the report "Economy of Time in Education," *Government Bulletin No. 548*; on p. 40 this important bulletin says:

One of the conspicuous causes of waste in elementary education is the attempt to give the same preparation to all, regardless of wide differences in aptitude and the character of the life to be led. Classifying the grades above the sixth as secondary will facilitate a differentiation in the upper grades which will permit some pupils to make more direct preparation for business or the industries than is now possible, while others continue to follow the more

strictly academic program as far as may be necessary in preparation for managerial positions or professional life. Without accurate and detailed accounts of the results of actual trial under such an organization, positive assertions as to economy of time could not be made, yet the probability that time would thus be saved would be strong. But enough communities have made progress in this important field to place the matter beyond the stage of mere probability. Worcester, Indianapolis, Baltimore, Lincoln, Harrisburg, and Rochester by maintaining special classes for exceptionally capable children have shown that it is possible for able pupils to save one year between the sixth grade and the twelfth, and with other advantages to themselves besides the saving of time.

#### PLAN OF SELECTING

The school is made up of pupils from every sixth A and seventh B grade in the city. The superintendent requests that about 10 per cent of the enrolment of these grades be recommended, selecting those whose records are highest and who are physically capable as well as mentally so. To the parents of those selected by the principals, the superintendent sends the following letter:

##### *To the Parents:*

In our public-school system there are some pupils who can, without jeopardizing health, accomplish more than their classmates but who, being able with little effort to keep pace with the rest, are satisfied and fail to develop the powers which are latent within them. While the average and less capable are gaining the ideal of hard work, these few are gaining the idea that all things can be had without effort. This idea is likely to follow them through life and to make them really less effective than some of those of smaller natural gifts who have gained the habit of intense application.

It is our purpose to select from the pupils who have completed the sixth A grammar grade those who have shown unusual capacity. With the consent of the parents these pupils are to be gathered into what is known as the Preparatory School, where during the next two years they will be permitted to complete the regular work of the seventh and eighth grades, and the work of the first year of the high school, so that when they enter the high school it will take only three years for graduation. This plan will save a year's time, but the most important consideration is that these pupils will learn to exercise their exceptional powers instead of settling down into contented mediocrity.

Occasionally after a pupil enters this school, we find it advisable that he should not attempt to do all the work of the first year of the high school. In this case he will be permitted to carry such part of it as seems best to the parent.

Inasmuch as —— is one of those receiving the highest standings in scholarship in —— class, —— is entitled to membership in this school for such length of time as —— shows that —— is able to carry the work successfully. Are you willing for —— to become a member of the Preparatory School, which is conducted in the McKinley Building, corner 15th and M streets?

An early reply will be greatly appreciated. I shall be pleased to answer any questions relative to the plan.

Respectfully yours,

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#### COURSE OF STUDY FOR THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

The course of study is the same as that in the regular seventh and eighth grades, except that music and art are omitted and the addition of one year of regular Freshman high-school work is done during the two years in preparatory. To get this additional work done the preparatory student finds it necessary to study  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours, on the average, outside of the regular class hours.

The high standard of good health exhibited indicates that this is not too much. Besides this extra work, many of these pupils become proficient in music and art because of the private work done in these lines.

#### SUMMARY OF ADVANTAGES

- A. Better work done, because more intensive.
- B. Fewer pupils in room, so better instruction.
- C. Same teacher for four successive semesters.
- D. No waste of time marking time waiting for slow pupil.
- E. German and Latin languages acquired at psychological language age.

F. Punctuality and attendance average 98 plus, which indicates that good habits are established, also that good health is prevalent.

Since the preparatory students come long distances, averaging one to four miles, they get more fresh air and outdoor exercise than they otherwise would. This perhaps accounts in part for the high standard of good health. *None* have dropped out or failed because of poor health. Very few wear glasses—not one in twenty.

They are a happy, athletic lot. Athletic buttons have been won by 67 per cent in the past two years; 90 per cent of the present

seventh preparatory class have Palmer honors; 100 per cent of the present eighth preparatory class have Palmer awards.

It is the policy of the preparatory school to make classroom instruction concrete and connect life in school with commercial and industrial life outside. To assist in this, speakers from the outside have talked to the pupils regularly. For example, "Banking," Mr. Ryons; "Geography—Weather Forecasting," Mr. Loveland; "Gardening," Mr. Young; "Bird-Study," Mr. Markham; "Right Living," Dr. Wharton; "Newspaper Cartoons," Herbert Johnson; "Cigarettes," Superintendent Hunter.

### COURSE OF STUDY

#### SEVENTH PREPARATORY

FIRST SEMESTER			SECOND SEMESTER		
Subject	Weeks	No. Minutes	Subject	Weeks	No. Minutes
Arithmetic.....	18	100	Arithmetic.....	18	100
English.....	18	50	English.....	18	50
Grammar.....	18	75	Grammar.....	18	75
Geography.....	18	125	United States History...	18	125
Spelling.....	18	50	Spelling.....	18	50
Writing.....	18	50	Writing.....	18	50
Reading.....	18	50	Reading.....	18	50
Civics.....	18	25	Civics.....	18	50
Domestic Science or Manual Training.....	18	90	Domestic Science or Manual Training.....	18	90
High-School English.....	18	20	High-School English.....	18	100
Greek History.....	18	125	Roman History.....	18	125
Latin or German.....	18	200	High-School Science.....	18	240
			Latin or German.....	18	200

#### EIGHTH PREPARATORY

Arithmetic.....	18	125	Arithmetic.....	18	75
English.....	18	50	English.....	18	50
Grammar.....	18	75	Grammar.....	18	75
United States History...	18	100	United States History...	18	100
Spelling.....	18	50	Spelling.....	18	50
Writing.....	18	50	Writing.....	18	50
Reading.....	18	50	Reading.....	18	50
Domestic Science or Manual Training.....	18	90	Civics.....	6	75
High-School English.....			Domestic Science or Manual Training.....	18	90
Greek History.....	18	125	High-School English.....	18	120
High-School Science.....	18	240	Roman History.....	18	125
Latin or German.....	18	120	High-School Science.....		
			Latin or German.....	18	160